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Statement for CULCON (May 2001) On Joint Research and Information Sharing on Education Policy Topics between the US Department of Education (ED) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT)

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Education has emerged as an increasingly prominent item in international discussions, as countries like Japan, the United States, and many others recognize that we face similar challenges in preparing students for the new knowledge economy emerging in the 21st century. We also look to one another to learn from our differences, including different strengths and strategies to deal with our respective educational challenges. For example, the United States views Japan as a leader in educating large proportions of its students to high standards in mathematics, as revealed most recently in the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Repeat Study (TIMSS-R). The United States also believes that it can learn a great deal from Japan with respect to the preparation of effective classroom teachers. At the same time, Japan is interested in U.S. approaches to educating highly able students and strategies to develop in students the capacity to approach problems in a creative and flexible way. Japan also is interested in learning from the United States effective approaches to combating the breakdown of positive values in schools. For this reason, the U.S. Department of Education and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology look favorably on opportunities to engage in joint or complementary research to learn effective educational strategies from one another.

Japan and the United States are working together on education issues such as those mentioned above through multilateral forums including the OECD and APEC. Examples of highly useful joint research include joint participation in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and both countries' active participation in past APEC research on teacher preparation and induction policies and practices.

In 2000 and early 2001, some 855 Japanese policymakers, educators, and researchers visited the U.S. Department of Education to exchange views on a wide range of education policy issues, including educational technology, strategic planning, special education, bilingual education, religion in schools, higher education, and many others. Also, as part of the GOJ's Master Teacher Program, American and Japanese teachers

and students are engaged in collaborative classroom-to-classroom learning activities via the Internet.

Over the past two years, MEXT and the US Department of Education have discussed the advisability of launching new joint research in education. MEXT proposed to study education for highly gifted students, particularly in the areas of mathematics and science, and ED expressed its willingness to facilitate such a study by Japanese researchers. ED suggested that U.S. researchers might wish to focus on effective teaching strategies in mathematics in primary and middle schools in Japan. The possibility of conducting parallel research was discussed. The design of specific new research is dependent on policy direction from the new U.S. Administration and further discussions between ED and MEXT. Both countries look forward to continued policy dialogue and information exchange focused on strengthening education in both countries.